

# WILLIAM GLACKENS MEMORIAL EXHIBITION



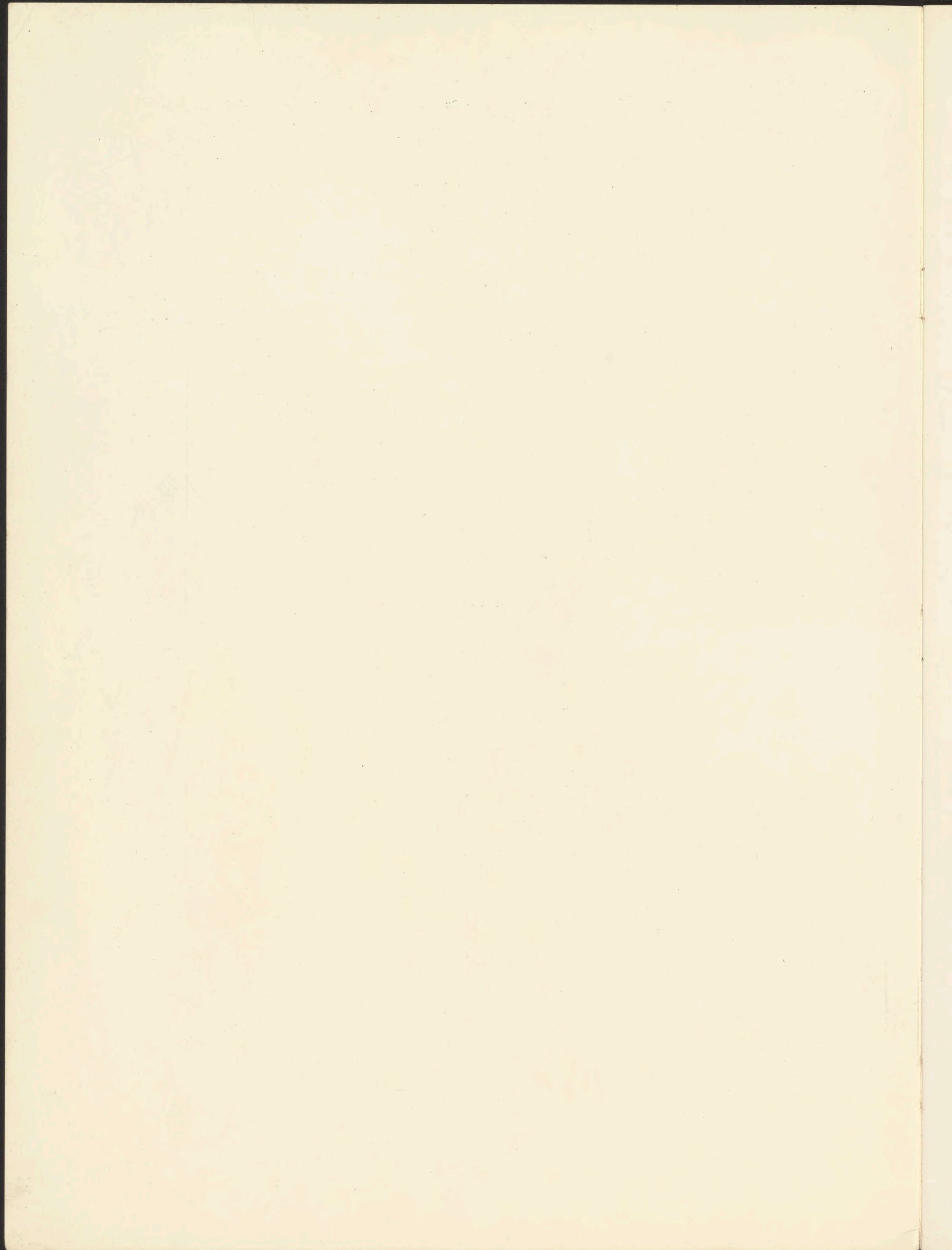
CHILD IN A GARDEN, (1916)

SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF ART

SEPTEMBER THREE TO TWENTY-FOUR • NINETEEN HUNDRED THIRTY-NINE

*Illustrated Catalog with an Essay by Forbes Watson . . . . . 25 cents*





WILLIAM GLACKENS  
MEMORIAL EXHIBITION

*Catalog ~ Biographical Note*

*Essay by Forbes Watson*

*This Exhibition is Circulated by*

THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS





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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THROUGH the courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art, The American Federation of Arts is sending this exhibition to America's leading museums and art organizations.

It was selected directly from the original "William Glackens Memorial Exhibition" at the Whitney, by Mrs. Juliana Force, Director of the Museum, Mr. Hermon More, Curator, and Mr. Forbes Watson, Associate Editor of the Magazine of Art and Adviser to the Section of Fine Arts, Treasury Department.

We are greatly indebted to Mrs. William Glackens, to the Albright Art Gallery, to the University of Nebraska and to Mr. G. Alan Chidsey for lending the pictures. Unless otherwise designated, the works in the exhibition are lent by Mrs. Glackens.

## OPPORTUNITY TO PURCHASE

THIS exhibition gives museums and private collectors a remarkable opportunity to augment their collections from a comprehensive selection of Glackens' work. Many of the finest paintings and drawings are for sale. A price list is available at the office.





THE ARTIST'S WIFE AND SON. OIL, 1911



# WILLIAM GLACKENS

BY FORBES WATSON

THESE SELECTIONS from the William Glackens Memorial Exhibition which was held at the Whitney Museum of American Art in January, 1939, offer a stirring opportunity to enjoy and study the paintings and drawings of a man who, for over forty years, actively exercised his rare gifts. This he did in a state of happy absorption granted only to the artist whose inner life so possesses him that the practicalities and vulgarities of "getting on" have for him no charms.

The conditions under which the William Glackens Memorial Exhibition were held were so exactly right that acknowledgment should be made to those who were responsible for its choice, arrangement and completeness. Mrs. Juliana Force, Director of the Whitney Museum, has been an ardent admirer and warm friend of Glackens for many years. She wisely appointed three of the painters who knew Glackens as a man and an artist, Guy Pène du Bois, Leon Kroll and Eugene Speicher, to advise on the exhibition. She collaborated with the Committee as did also Mrs. William Glackens. Whatever changes will take place in the world's estimate of Glackens, and to judge by the record of other modern painters great changes will take place, those who arranged this exhibition must feel that they have offered to the public the perfect start toward the eventual and as yet unknown position which time will give to the art of William Glackens.

The exhibition covers a period of forty years from 1897 to 1937. Actually Glackens entered the professional world six years earlier when he joined the staff of *The Philadelphia Ledger* "as an artist" at the age of twenty-one. While working on various newspapers Glackens continued to be an intermittent student at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. In those days the "artist" was as necessary, relatively, to the newspaper as the photographer is today. Neither reproduction processes nor cameras had reached their present wizardry so that it was not the photographer but the "artist" who rushed to record visually the events that the reporter rushed to cover in words.

In 1892 Glackens went to *The Philadelphia Press* and later to *The Ledger*. He returned again to *The Press* so that while still a student he was gaining practical experience in quick, decisive observation and rapid drawing such as no conscious sketch class offers, for whatever the speed and adverse conditions under which they were done, these rapid sketches had to meet the requirements of newspaper illustration. Finally, in 1895 Glackens made the pilgrimage to Paris usual for artists of that day. There he rented a studio and worked but did not enter the schools.

When he returned to America in 1896 George Luks was the "premier humorist artist" for *The New York World*. Through him Glackens succeeded in getting an assignment to do comic drawings for *The World's* Sunday supplement. This was Glackens' first job in New York. He left it to become a sketch artist on *The New York Herald*. He also began to work for the magazines, *McClure's* in particular. He was sent to northwest Wisconsin to make drawings of a log drive to illustrate an article

by Ray Stannard Baker. Returning from Wisconsin he again worked for a period on *The World*.

At the outbreak of the Spanish War *McClure's* sent him to Florida with instructions to go to Cuba as quickly as possible and join Garcia's army. His drawings were to be sent back as opportunity offered. His instructions were cancelled when it was found that the American army was going to move that summer. Glackens accompanied the American army, together with a great number of other correspondents who were dumped into Cuba to shift for themselves. While in Cuba he contracted a mild attack of malaria. After the campaign he returned to America and again worked for magazines, especially *Scribner's*. He also began drawing for *The Saturday Evening Post*.

Such were the life and activities of Glackens during his twenties and I still marvel that he took time off to tell me these facts in his old studio in Washington Square, for he was always shy about talking and practically never discussed himself. It is with the work of his late twenties that the exhibition begins historically. Early drawings are here and early paintings, in lower key and simpler palette than his later work. These include the paintings of the Luxembourg Gardens and Central Park. The note of playfulness struck in these earlier works remains clear throughout his later development.

Although Glackens went his way with such composure, it happens that throughout his career he took part in those liberal exhibitions which marked definite steps in the history of American painting during his professional career. He was one of the outstanding artists in the first independent exhibition that was ever held in this country. Although his contribution did not arouse as noisy arguments as the paintings by Luks, Bellows and one or two of the younger members of the Henri group, the work of Glackens was ardently discussed by the students who flocked to the exhibition. It was the same thing at the Armory Show. In that case, however, there were other reasons for discussion. The large family group, now known to every close follower of American painting, did attract a great deal of attention.

In this particular exhibition Glackens is represented by works belonging to these years. We also see a somewhat later development which is well represented by the irresistible beach groups and flower pictures. From the earliest drawing to the latest painting, play, charm, enjoyment accompany Glackens, like spirits of a brighter world, in his quiet, absorbed and wondering progress.

When we think of him as a master of color composition with his amazing understanding of its infinite complexities we might easily decide that the half dozen years, from the ages of twenty-one to twenty-six, had a small share in his development. Is that true? Looking back at him, a boy of twenty-one in the midst of the rough and ready life of the reporter artist, we can easily imagine that he saw a lot of life and that, fresh to the excitements of meeting the deadline, he had no time to develop the habit of taking himself too seriously. There was





GARDEN AT HARTFORD. OIL, 1918



SUMMER. OIL, ABOUT 1914





BOUQUET IN QUIM-  
PER PITCHER. OIL,  
1937

no time to become precious or earnest or play the romantic art student. He had to reach the fire, see the fire and draw the scene. He had to draw fast and effectively and be on time. Otherwise there was no money in the envelope at the end of the week and perhaps no job the week following. A few years of this sort of thing and any young man with a keen eye would observe much and fix the habit of observing. Looking at the world would become natural, speculating about one's self rather a bore.

Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to think that the naturally acute vision was so trained by newspaper sketching in his

twenties that it helped him all the more to realize later the complexities of color composition. To be sure Glackens had the divine sense, but to realize color means to see relationships in color values and Glackens, in his years of active sketching of the outside world, must have developed an unusual visual grasp. To discuss color after one has examined many of the paintings by Glackens is inevitable. Yet few subjects are more easily misunderstood. For what is meant is not a color like Naples yellow or cerulean blue such as one squeezes out of a tube, but color composition, something that happens only after the artist has created color out of colors.





JETTIES AT BELLPORT. OIL, ABOUT 1916. LENT BY THE ALBRIGHT ART GALLERY, BUFFALO

Colors are to color what words are to language. As we all know the deep harmonies of darks can be made to be color just as much as the cheeriest combinations by Matisse or the finest flower picture by Glackens. And few artists of any period painted flowers more in the spirit in which the earth made them.

Glackens proved that he could compose beautifully in darker tones. Eventually, however, he came to find his happiness in more brilliant combinations. Many people prefer his earlier work, finding it more personal, but for me at least Glackens did not deeply realize himself until he mastered his final effulgent palette.

I have heard it said that the reason why some of our most intensive social-purpose painters paint dryly and acidly is because they want to direct the observer's attention to the dire story unmitigated by attractive craft. If that is true, then to such painters, logically and probably actually, the aims of a Glackens would seem frivolous in comparison with the aims of an Otto Dix. Glackens would be put down contemptuously as an artist who had not placed his talents at the service of

social justice. To such an argument Glackens would undoubtedly chuckle and say: "Maybe they are right; I don't know." But he would continue painting in his own way completely unmoved. He once said to me that he could not think of a great painting that was great for any other reason than that it was a great painting.

And in all these pictures there is not one declarative note. But then Glackens was not declarative either with words or with paint. Ideas came out—clear, whimsical, suggestive. He made no attempt to beat an idea into another person's head not caring very much whether it entered his head or not. He had his own ideas. You could have yours. Yet his unruffled willingness to allow the other fellow his own point of view did not diminish the conviction that he conveyed of complete confidence in himself—an unassertive confidence founded on his serenity, his dignity, his seraphic outlook.

These pictures are the strongest argument, if that were needed, that a sensitive person can win a lifetime of delight from the pleasures of painting and drawing. Glackens drew lightly, wittily, personally and playfully, yet so sweet was





MAHONE BAY. OIL, 1911. LENT BY THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

general illustration when he worked for *McClure's* that many complaints were received from subscribers that his drawings were too realistic, not pretty enough. Had he never used color he could still have left a record rare and original. As the case rests his drawings were a distinct influence in the history of American illustration.

Both as a social human being and as an artist the emphatic seemed to him slightly uncivilized. Unlike his colleagues from Philadelphia, Robert Henri and George Luks, he had no desire to hear himself talk. The oracular, the pontifical, the dogmatic, the oratorical—none of these entered the world in which Glackens carried on his happy and fundamentally solitary life. In evidence of his aloofness and remoteness is the story of the newly discovered paintings. As already said, a group more familiar with Glackens' work and more sympathetic could not have been organized to plan his memorial exhibition. Yet even the members of this group did not know all of Glackens' work. When they explored his canvas racks they discovered pictures that his family had never seen before. The fact that with two painters in his family, his wife and daughter, there were completed canvases in the studio on the top

floor of his home, which they had not seen, will surprise only those who did not know Glackens. Much more than most people he led an inner life. And thinking what was the matter with a painting of his he would forget everything else. If in one of these moments of absorption he put a picture away without showing it to anyone, what more natural, especially for a man so unconcerned with praise, so deeply modest, so averse to being fussed over? He would show his work pleasantly if you asked to see it but it did not occur to him to ask anyone to look at his work. Other people could come and get pictures for exhibitions or elect him to societies if they wanted to, but if he himself cared a jot about fame it was not apparent in anything he said or did.

Every friend of Glackens knows that he lived completely above rows, gossip or art politics. The great enmities that followed the Armory Show when the Henri-Bellows cohorts assembled for battle (of words only) with the Davies-Kuhn cohorts may have made the rafters of the old Manhattan Hotel quiver. Glackens was merely amused and thought it silly for so many people to waste their time. He thought there were too many artist organizations, believing that if more





LENNA AND IMP. OIL,  
1930

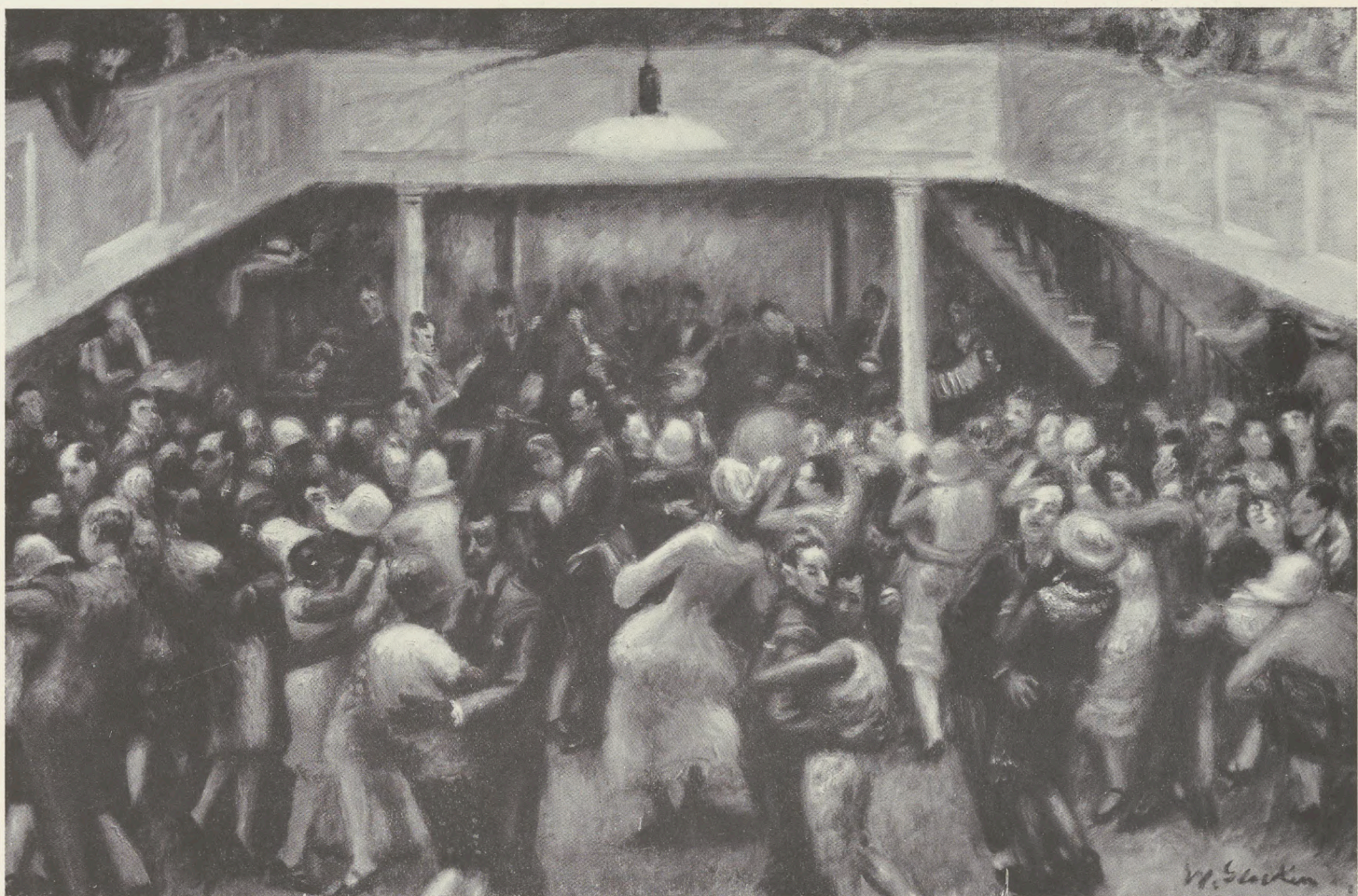
painters enjoyed painting they would spend less time organizing. The only organization I ever heard him refer to with something like affection was the Independent Society. Of the others he said: "I belong to too many of them." If everyone could show his work without cliques, plots and counterplots, he would have been satisfied. Some artists thought the aloofness of Glackens was the result of his freedom from material needs. This theory discounts two facts. Publicity craving is a

disease unaffected by the contents of the pocketbook. *Vide* Whistler, George Bellows, George Luks, and a hundred artists today, who would rush to join any organization if they smelt a little publicity from afar. The truth is that Glackens actively disliked attention. He liked companionship, wit, gaiety, good food, good wine, charming interiors, cultivated gardens as much as he disliked being thrust upon the center of the stage. No one could make him play the lion. I have seen people try.





HILLSIDE NEAR LA CIOTAT. OIL, 1930



BAL MARTINIQUE. OIL, 1928





At right: SHOPPERS. OIL, 1907.  
Below: THE DREAM RIDE. OIL,  
ABOUT 1920







THE SODA FOUNTAIN. OIL,  
1935

The effort silenced Glackens and he retired to his own world.

As for the *cher maître* nonsense that many artists indulge in openly or by implication, it was antipathetic to his whole nature. I met him once in the studio of a younger, much less known painter. After looking at one particular picture intently Glackens turned to the artist and said simply: "I wish I could do that." This is not the kind of thing that the artist who has arrived by pushing says or for that matter thinks. Painters less absorbed in painting than Glackens qualify their praise of younger men with that slight condescension which they feel that their own eminence demands. Of that inferiority Glackens could not be guilty.

In the understanding and deeply felt preface to the excellent Whitney catalog, Guy Pène du Bois, who appreciates Glackens beyond any other critic, writes:

"... Like Corot he had two real passions, painting and

fishng, and, as with that saintly Frenchman, it will always be a question which one was the recreation. The characters of the two are in almost complete accord. Both, for an example, had enough money so that selling pictures was not essential to their welfare. Both had enough faith in themselves, a thing apparently rare among financially independent painters, so that they did not need to be bolstered by the insidious flattery of sales. Both were kindly almost to a fault. If Corot carried that fault further than Glackens, as when he painted those trees 'for the little birds' at the importunity of dealers that was because his temptation, rather than his kindness, was greater. Glackens found good in the work of all painters with some indignation against those who could not follow him. At the meeting held at the Academy, last year, for the election of new members, he took so long looking at examples of the candidates' work, hung on the walls, that the meeting was





GIRL WITH DRAPERIES. OIL, ABOUT 1916

called to order before he had finished. Afterwards he told me that he had depleted his supply of 'yesses'—little circular tags marked yes or no used in the voting. 'If you look long enough at a work you'll always find something good in it.' Being an honest man it had taken him, in this case, a very long time. But you can be sure that somewhere in these, for the most part, banal works he had ferreted out a moment of good painting, been sure that it was there.

"About his own work he was much more severe. Some pictures, like the latest one of his daughter Lenna, took him years to bring to a conclusion. In the rack adjoining his studio at No. 10 West 9th Street there were more than a hundred set aside for some future right moment when they could be finished. Some of these works, and more than a few were glorious, had never been seen by the family. He certainly did not call upon the opinion of others. He walked in solitude through





PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG GIRL. OIL, ABOUT 1918

this benighted world and searched for the good in it, making sure that it was good, as he had done that day with the Academy prospects. . . .”

Some artists have difficulty in forgetting themselves. They see their audience as they work and dedicate as they paint. For Glackens painting was blissful forgetfulness, I am sure. Not only did he forget himself in his own painting but before any painting that he liked his expression was one of content-

ment. That was true also when he took long walks and forgot himself in his enjoyment of observation. Granted his rare talent, it was perhaps his exceptional capacity to enjoy the world he saw with such happy and complete absorption that gives to his art its power to win our affections. He was not a painter before whom his admirers bow. He was one whom they love because he had serenity, gaiety, charm and the dignity of modesty.



# BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

WILLIAM JAMES GLACKENS was born March 13, 1870, in Philadelphia, where his ancestors of English-Irish and Pennsylvania Dutch origin had lived for many generations. After graduating with the degree of Bachelor of Arts from the Central High School, Philadelphia, he commenced the study of art at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, at the same time starting his professional career as illustrator for the *Philadelphia Record*, the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* and *Philadelphia Press*. While on the staff of these newspapers, he became associated with George Luks, Everett Shinn and John Sloan, who were employed in a similar capacity.

In 1895 he went to Paris working independently and exhibiting a painting in the Paris Salon. He was also an exhibitor in the Paris Exposition of 1900 where at the close of his life in the Exposition of 1937 he was to receive the highest award accorded an American artist, the Grand Prix.

Returning to America in 1896, he moved to New York resuming his work as illustrator for the *New York Herald*, the *New York World* and various magazines. Among his assignments were sketches for *McClure's* of a log-drive in Wisconsin, and a series of drawings covering the entire campaign in Cuba of the Spanish-American War. In 1902 he visited Saint Pierre and Miquelon, Newfoundland, with Ernest Fuhr.

The following year he returned to this country and in 1903 married the artist, Edith Dimock, in Hartford, Conn., and three years later with his wife, made another trip to Europe, painting this time in Spain.

Glackens first exhibited at the New Arts Club in 1908 at Macbeth's as one of "The Eight," that group of individualists who have exerted a notable influence on American art. The other members were Prendergast, Davies, Lawson, Henri, Luks, Shinn and Sloan, the last four, like Glackens, former Philadelphians.

Always interested in liberal movements in art, he exhibited in the first Independent Exhibition in 1910, and after the organization of the Society of Independent Artists, was its first president in 1916 and 1917. Instrumental in organizing the Armory show of 1913, he acted as Chairman of the Committee for the selection of American exhibitors.

For more than forty years Glackens' home was in New York City, many of his summers spent in Bellport, Long Island, in Hartford, Gloucester and New Hampshire. In 1925 he went to France. The next seven years were divided as far as painting is concerned, between Paris and its suburbs, the south of France and his New York studio. Since 1932 he remained and painted in this country.

He died May 22, 1938.

His work has been shown in all the important exhibitions in this country and has been accorded the following awards: Gold Medal for drawing, Pan American Exposition, Buffalo, N. Y., 1901; Silver Medal for painting and Bronze Medal for illustrations, St. Louis Exposition, St. Louis, Mo., 1904; Honorable Mention, International Exposition, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pa., 1905; Bronze Medal, Panama Pacific



GLACKENS AND IRA. FROM A SNAPSHOT MADE IN 1912

Exposition, San Francisco, Calif., 1915; Temple Gold Medal, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Pa., 1924; Second Prize, International Exposition, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pa., 1929; Carl Beck Gold Medal, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Pa., 1933; Jennie Sesnan Medal, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Pa., 1936; Alleghany Garden Club Prize, Pittsburgh International, 1936; Grand Prix, Paris Exposition, 1937; J. Henry Scheidt Prize, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Pa., 1938.

He was a member of the National Academy of Design (A. N. A. 1906, N. A. 1933), Society of American Illustrators, American Society of Painters, Sculptors and Gravers, Society of Independent Artists, and the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and others.

His work is represented in many private collections and in the following public institutions: Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts; Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pennsylvania; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts; Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois; Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, Columbus, Ohio; Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City; Newark Museum Association, Newark, New Jersey; Phillips Memorial Gallery, Washington, D. C.; Sweet Briar College, Sweet Briar, Virginia; University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City.







